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Idaho Engineering Students Aim to Improve Energy Use at Businesses

IDAHO FALLS – Students at Idaho's three research universities have become teachers for businesses in and around the state. Earlier this year, teams of engineering students began visiting manufacturing plants to assess how they can operate more efficiently.

The teams are part of a new statewide program run by the Center for Advanced Energy Studies Energy Efficiency Research Institute (CEERI). The CEERI Industrial Assessment Center hires engineering students to study industrial systems at participating companies and recommend ways to improve energy efficiency. The program provides students with engineering experience, and businesses receive a free energy use assessment.

"This really is a win-win for everyone," said John Gardner, a professor and team leader at Boise State University. "The students are gaining a new perspective on energy efficiency, and the companies get detailed information about how they can save energy and money."

The CEERI Industrial Assessment Center has student teams in place at Boise State University, Idaho State University and the University of Idaho. So far, the teams have completed three site visits.

During assessments, students tour facilities, interview plant or company employees and create a plan for how to improve energy efficiency and operations.

Gardner and Kelly Moylan, a CEERI research associate, are leading the statewide program and also advise the Boise-based student team. At ISU, Mary Hoffe, mechanical engineering faculty, and Lawrence Beatty, director of the Energy Systems Technology & Education Center (ESTEC), are leading the student team. UI engineering professors Dev Shrestha and Steven Beyerlein are advising the Moscow-based team.

"We're able to cover a large geographic area because of the way the center is structured," Gardner said.

The CEERI Industrial Assessment Center program is funded by a five-year, \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. It is one of 24 such DOE-supported centers across the nation and the only one in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and Washington.

More information on the industrial assessment program is available at <http://ceeri.boisestate.edu/iac/>. Manufacturers interested in scheduling an assessment should contact Moylan at iac@boisestate.edu or 208-426-4053.

The Center for Advanced Energy Studies is a partnership between Idaho National Laboratory and the state of Idaho through its three research universities – BSU, ISU and UI. For more information, go to www.caesenergy.org.

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-INL- 12-018

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